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Title:

Comments: FW: RMBL- Forest Plan and Mt. CB

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From: ibillick@gmail.com [mailto:ibillick@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, June 11, 2019 2:02 PM

To: Staley, Samantha J -FS <samantha.j.staley@usda.gov>

Subject: RMBL- Forest Plan and Mt. CB

Hi Samantha-

Here is a letter of support from the Town of Mt. CB. If there is a better mechanism to submit it, please let me know. I went through the online submission webpage and it provided your email.

Thanks! Would love to give you and the team a tour if you make it over this way during summer.

On behalf of the Citizens of Mt. Crested Butte, the Mt. Crested Butte Town Council strongly supports the Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory's (RMBL) request for a "Special Area Designation" for portions of the East River Valley located in the Gunnison National Forest, Gunnison County Colorado. The Town of Mt. Crested Butte is adjacent to the boundary of the potential Special Area.

Over the past 10 years plus, as Colorado Summer Tourism has been increasingly promoted by the State of Colorado and the ski resorts of Colorado, the Town of Mt. Crested Butte has experienced major growth in summer tourism. For example, Sales Tax Collections have increased 235% for the month of July from 2010 to 2018. The increasing number of visitors coming to experience and enjoy our National Forest has impacted RMBL's research efforts and has prompted camping restriction during the peak summer months. To help mitigate human impacts in the forest, the Town of Mt. Crested Butte has an annual budget line item to support the efforts of the Crested Butte Conservation Corps, a non-profit organization that provides clean up efforts and trail maintenance annually on our public lands and specifically in the proposed Special Area.

In addition to the science generated from RMBL's field station, RMBL is a strong supporter of our local economy that is not coupled with our major economic driver of tourism. RMBL has an annual budget of \$3 million/year and a staff of 15 full-time employees. They host approximately 250 scientists and students/year. Additionally, RMBL supports local school programs as well as tourism with public restrooms and a Visitor Center that hosts close to 20,000 visitors/year.

Currently the Gunnison District Staff understands RMBL and their contributions to science and our local economy, but with a "Special Area Designation" the importance of RMBL would be evident into the future as

USFS staff and leadership change. And, the designation would inform the public that they are visiting a special place with a solid history of scientific research allowing them to take advantage of unique learning opportunities. Please consider creating a "Special Area Designation" for this unique part of the Gunnison National Forest that surrounds Gothic, Colorado.

Ian Billick, PhD

Executive Director/RMBL

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